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A Message from the Navy Surgeon General: Suicide Prevention

Filed under FAMILIES FLEET AND THE FLEET MARINE FORCE LEADERSHIP

(NO COMMENTS)

By Vice Adm. Matthew Nathan



I have a truly remarkable appreciation for the more than 60,000 men and women who make up our Navy Medicine family.

I especially admire your dedication and service to our country across the globe. It's commendable and praiseworthy, and I'm very proud to call myself a shipmate. That's why I become deeply troubled when I think of the tragic fact that some of our shipmates even consider taking their own lives.

Suicide within the ranks is an emergency that I am absolutely committed to preventing. Because even one suicide is too many, it's

very important that we be there for "every Sailor, every day." It's an all hands effort, and I urge each of you to stem the tide by being actively building trustful and meaningful connections with your peers. Go out of your way to be engaged with each other during calm and rough seas. It might not always be easy to determine what you can do to prevent suicides, but there are plenty of steps we can all take to intervene in times of need or crisis.


So, get involved, especially when anyone on our team is going through transitional periods – moving between jobs, re-acclimating themselves with life after deployment, transitioning from the service, experiencing a loss, or even having relationship difficulties – they need to know that a support system is available to them. Transitions may mean new beginnings, but with them may come the stress of developing new routines, forming new social circles and support groups, and reestablishing bearings in both the professional and personal realms. I encourage you to go the extra mile. Take the initiative to ask questions and really listen to what they have to say. Just being a friend to someone in need can make all the difference.


Don't be afraid to reach out to your peers to "connect the dots." Anxieties may not be visible on the surface, but the subtle changes in attitude or daily routines, or uncharacteristic words, can all be small signs to a greater problem. We must break the code of silence and reach out to each other. You can be the first line of action to someone's recovery and you may not even know it. Think on the occasion where you hear of someone harming themselves and everyone says..."I didn't even know them, they kept to themselves, never even said hello." Maybe your "hello" to them may be enough to make a difference.


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Let your fellow shipmates know that they are a part of a team. If you weren't the one to speak up, how can you be sure anyone else has? By simply reaching out, we can create a sense of community, providing the comfort one may need to seek help if they need it. Most importantly, don't forget the same information applies to you. Just as it is crucial for you to look out for others, we must also take steps towards building our own personal resilience. Keeping up your own physical well-being through healthy eating, active living, and seeking support for yourself can be one of the most influential preventive measures against being overcome with stress. Yourself included, we must look out for "every Sailor, every day."

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